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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Fiftieth session
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8(XXIII)

Letter dated 26 May 1988 from the Permanent Representative of the Azerbaijan Republic to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

I have the honour to transmit herewith "Information on mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from their historical and ethnic lands in the territory of the Armenian SSR".

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and the above-mentioned information as an official document of the fiftieth session of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities under item 2 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed): Sima EIVAZOVA
Ambassador

Annex

Information on mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from their historical and ethnic lands in the territory of the Armenian SSR between 1948 and 1953

Following the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia in late 1920, the Armenians were presented with a real opportunity to fulfill their age-old dream of creating an Armenian State and making territorial claims on neighbouring States. Over the 70-years of Soviet rule, the Armenians conducted a policy of building an "Armenia for Armenians only", expanding their territory at the expense of Azerbijani lands and using every possible means to expel Azerbijanis from their historical and ethnic lands. During this period, the aforementioned policy was implemented systematically and methodically, regardless of who headed the organs of State in Armenia.

The greatest achievement of the Armenian nationalists nestling in the leadership of the USSR was the implementation at the State level, with J. Stalin's blessing, of repressive measures against Azerbaijanis on the pretext of resettling Armenians coming from abroad.

Having taken possession of the rich territories of Zangezur in 1920, the Armenians sought in 1921 to annex the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan to the territory of Armenia. In July 1923 they managed to secure autonomous status for the Nagorny Karabakh region. However, the Armenian nationalists never gave up the idea of appropriating that territory, and raised this issue on many occasions. Following the war, in November 1945 the Armenian leadership wrote to Stalin to ask about the unification of the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan with the Armenian SSR, arguing for this purpose that Nagorny Karabakh bordered on the Armenian SSR and that its economy was closely linked to that of Armenia. When they failed to achieve their ends, the Armenians and their stooges in Moscow began to resort to various subterfuges in order to remove from Armenia Azerbaijanis who were mainly living in areas adjacent to the border with Azerbaijan. On the pretext of providing a labour force for the cotton-growing regions of the Mugan-Milsk steppe in the Azerbaijani SSR, they proposed the resettlement of Azerbaijanis from the territory of the Armenian SSR in order to settle the vacated lands with Armenians coming from abroad, and here they achieved their purpose.

Consequently, on 23 December 1947, the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted Decision No. 4083 on resettling collective farm workers and other members of the Azerbaijani population from the Armenian SSR to the Kura-Araks lowlands of the Azerbaijani SSR. It is obvious from the content of this completely unsound document, which bears Stalin's signature, dispenses with a preamble and launches straight into the operative section, that it was drawn up in haste. It is no coincidence that the Council of Ministers of the USSR was subsequently obliged to supplement its first decision with decision No. 754 on 10 March 1947. This second decision, adopted "further to the decision of 23 December 1947" and again signed by Stalin, outlines the planned measures to resettle Azerbaijanis.

The first section of the decision of 23 December 1947 indicates that between 1948 and 1950, "on the basis of the voluntary principle", 100,000 collective farm workers and other members of the Azerbaijani population living in the Armenian SSR were to be resettled in the Kura-Araks lowlands of the Azerbaijani SSR. Of this total, 10,000 were to be resettled in 1948, 40,000 in 1949 and 50,000 in 1950.

The reason for the haste in drawing up this decision is abundantly clear from one particular section of the decision, namely "to authorize the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR to use buildings and living accommodation vacated as a result of the resettlement of the Azerbaijani population to the Kura-Araks lowlands for the installation of Armenians coming from abroad".

Numerous documents attest to the implementation at the State level of forcible resettlement of Azerbaijanis from their historical and ethnic territories, where they had been living for centuries, and to the hardships and torments which they experienced during this period. For the Azerbaijanis sent off to the Kura-Araks lowlands on special trains there were not even the most basic of amenities. They were a burden on the local population, in whose homes they were lodged, and consequently a certain tension grew up between the newcomers and the locals. They were housed in stables and tumbledown buildings which failed to meet the most elementary standards of habitation. Nevertheless, all the necessary measures were taken to enforce the decision to drive Azerbaijanis from Armenia.

In 1948 a total of 10,584 Azerbaijanis were resettled from Armenia in various regions of Azerbaijan. The resettlement of 40,000 people due to take place in 1949 proved impossible to implement owing to a lack of space to house them. In that year plans were made to resettle 15,731 people. However, the Council of Ministers of the USSR had called for the resettlement of 40,000 people. In response to this instruction, the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijani SSR sent a letter to the Government of the USSR stating that at least 20,000 dwellings would be required to accommodate the 90,000 people scheduled for resettlement in 1949-1950. That would necessitate expenditure of 400 million roubles for construction and installation work. The Azerbaijani SSR could not on its own carry out such a large volume of work within two years. It therefore requested that the planned number of resettlers be reduced to 15,000.

In December 1949 the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijani SSR again wrote to the Soviet Government requesting that changes be made in the resettlement plan to take account of the Republic's available resources. Thus a request was made for 15,000 people to be resettled in 1950, 10,000 in 1951, 20,000 per year in 1952 and 1953, and 15,000 in 1954. Between 1948 and 1950, only 34,383 people were resettled from the Armenian SSR. Large-scale resettlement continued right up to Stalin's death in 1953, and only then did the numbers begin to decrease. According to official records, 53,000 Azerbaijanis were resettled in the Kura-Araks lowlands region alone. However, this is not a complete list of the people who were resettled or forced to migrate from Armenia. There are official documents which show that the leadership of the Armenian SSR endeavoured to exploit every opportunity and used a variety of means to drive many more Azerbijanis from Armenia than the original decision had provided for. Consequently, thousands

of Azerbaijani families were forced to flee not just to various regions of Azerbaijan, but also to other republics of the USSR. Evidence of the policy of genocide waged by the Armenian leadership against Azerbaijanis is provided by the outrage perpetrated against the Azerbaijani population of the village of Lambeli in Alaverdi district on the personal instructions of S. Karapetyan, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR. There can be no doubt, therefore, that between 1948 and 1953 many more Azerbaijanis were actually resettled or forced to migrate than the original decision had called for. However, most of the people resettled from mountain pasture in Armenia were unable to adapt to the environment of the Mugan-Milsk steppe and either died or were forced to move on to other regions of Azerbaijan.

From the information above it is clear that the plan finally implemented in the late 1980s to drive all Azerbaijanis from their native lands and historical and ethnic territories which are now called "Armenia" was drawn up after the war. The Armenian nationalists had been waiting for a suitable opportunity. This was presented to them by M. Gorbachev's sinister policy of "perestroika".

On 18 December 1997, the President of the Azerbaijan Republic, Mr. Heydar Aliyev, promulgated a decree concerning the mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from their historical and ethnic lands in the territory of the Armenian SSR between 1948 and 1953. Pursuant to this decree, a State Commission has been established under the chairmanship of the Head of State to make a comprehensive study of the mass deportation of Azerbaijanis from their historical and ethnic lands in the territory of the Armenian SSR between 1948 and 1953, and to give a political and legal assessment of the State-sanctioned historical crime against the Azerbaijani people and make this known to the international community.